

**NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE VS. RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM:  
WHY NON-DOMINATION IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR RELATIONAL EQUALITY**

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Research Master Thesis (30EC)

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Word count: 20'096

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*May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

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## INTRODUCTION

### MOTIVATION

Between the publication of Rawls' "Theory of Justice" (1971) and Anderson's "What is the Point of Equality" (1999), there was a widespread consensus among egalitarians that the following ideal underlies egalitarian justice:

*"The distributive ideal of justice: A situation is just only if<sup>1</sup> the distribution of goods it involves has a particular set of desirable features"* (Lippert Rasmussen, 2018: 1).

The main debate among egalitarians was about what should be distributed equally as a matter of justice ('distribuendum'). Numerous proposals have been put forth on that matter: Rawls (1971) invoked primary social goods, Dworkin (1981) equality of resources, Arneson (1989, 1990) equality of opportunity for welfare, Cohen equality of access to advantage (1992) and advocates of the Capability approach (e.g., Sen 1995 or Nussbaum 2003) considered capabilities as the relevant 'distribuendum'.

Anderson broke with this tradition<sup>2</sup>. Her account of egalitarian justice, which she labels 'democratic equality', is "[...] fundamentally concerned with the *relationships* within which goods are distributed, not only with the distribution of goods themselves." (Anderson 1999: 314. Emphasis added.). She thought that the underlying ideal of egalitarian justice should be the following one:

*"The relational ideal of justice: A situation is just only if everyone relates to one another as equals"* (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 7).

Anderson and other relational egalitarians such as Lippert-Rasmussen, Scheffler and Schemmel have further developed this pioneering idea. Their contributions have brought

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<sup>1</sup> While egalitarian debates in the indicated time focussed on distributions, most distributive egalitarians acknowledged that there are other aspects of justice than the distributive one (e.g., Rawls, 1999: 8, Cohen, 2008: 6 or Dworkin, 2000: 12). An example in which deviations from the distributive ideal would be justified is the concern for retributive justice (e.g., punishing criminals) (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 1).

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, there were already scholars that criticized distributive egalitarianism and defended, as a supplement, or as a replacement, some version of relational egalitarianism before Anderson. The earliest example is Iris Marion Young's piece "Justice and the Politics of Difference" (1990). Jonathan Wolff (cf. his piece "Fairness, Respect and the Egalitarian Ethos" (1998)) and David Miller (cf. his piece "Equality and Justice" (1998)) followed Young's line of thought. It is nevertheless true that Anderson's piece "What is the point of Equality?" (1999) is widely seen as the birth of relational egalitarianism as distinct egalitarian position from distributive egalitarianism. Anderson was the first to systematically flesh out a relational egalitarian account of justice and her contribution "brought relational egalitarianism into the spotlight of political philosophy" (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 14).

clarity with regards to several questions, such as what it means to relate to each other as equals, whether this is required or merely valuable or whether relational egalitarianism and distributive egalitarianism are mutually exclusive. However, not all the conceptual challenges have been resolved. One of them pertains to the relationship between relational egalitarianism and freedom from domination. Freedom from domination is widely seen as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for relational equality by relational egalitarians. For example, Anderson identifies the capability to enable or avoid or escape entanglement in oppressive relationships as one core ideal of relational egalitarianism (Anderson, 1999: 316). Following Young (1990) she conceives of domination as one ‘face’ of oppression. However, oppression also encompasses violence, marginalization, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, which are conceptually distinct from domination (Young, 1990: 64).

This view on the relationship between domination and relational egalitarianism is not echoed by Phillip Pettit, the pioneer of neo-republican freedom, i.e., the idea that freedom consists in absence from domination. While he originally put forth this idea as a conception of freedom (cf. Pettit 1997), he later extended this idea to justice, arguing for the following ideal of justice:

*Justice as equal non-domination:* A situation is just if and only if<sup>3</sup> everyone is free from domination in the exercise of certain choices<sup>4</sup>.

His explanations on domination strongly suggest that relating to each other as equals is equivalent to being free from domination. For example, he argues that one is free from domination to the extent that one passes the eyeball test, i.e., *one is able to look others in the eye without fear or deference* (Pettit, 1997: 5 and Pettit, 2012: 84). He furthermore claims that neo-republican justice “requires that people should enjoy freedom as non-domination *in their relationships with one another*, whether as individuals to individuals, as groups to groups, or as groups to individuals” (Pettit, 2012: 77. Emphasis added).

Given that advocates of both concepts refer to the other concept when describing their own, the question arises what the exact relationship is between them. Roughly speaking, there are

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<sup>3</sup> The fact that Pettit conceives of non-domination as both a necessary and sufficient condition for justice becomes clear when he says that “if we pay the price of securing freedom as non-domination in a suitable measure, we will have paid enough to secure social justice and political legitimacy” (Pettit, 2012: 127), whereas social justice and political legitimacy make up comprehensive justice (Pettit, 2012: 78). Note that Pettit does not thereby commit to denying that there are other issues of importance to justice. It merely amounts to saying that these will be taken care of if non-domination is taken care of (Schemmel, 2021: 65).

<sup>4</sup> I will clarify later what sort of choices are meant here. As of now what matters is that neo-republican justice conceives of justice in terms of equal non-domination.

two camps in the debate on what the relationship between relational egalitarianism and freedom from domination is. One camp calls into question Anderson's and Pettit's view that non-domination is a necessary condition for relational equality. For example, Schmidt (2018) argues that neo-republican justice goes beyond relational egalitarianism in that it allows to object to cases of mutual domination. The other camp contends that, while non-domination is necessary for relational equality, it is not sufficient. Bengtson (2021) argues against Schmidt (2018) that relational egalitarianism captures cases of mutual domination, but that relational egalitarianism allows to object to some relationships involving racism, while neo-republican non-domination fails to object to those relationships. Furthermore, Garrau & Laborde (2015) and Schemmel (2021) recently argued that freedom from domination cannot make sense of relational equalities which arise due to structural phenomena. In particular, they argue that freedom from domination cannot capture cases of relational inequality which do not come about through an identifiable agent (be it an individual or a group), but through a norm-coordinated process which is unintentional and unconscious (Garrau & Laborde, 2015: 58 – 61 and Schemmel, 2021: chapter 6).

Despite those recent contributions, the precise relationship between equal non-domination<sup>5</sup> and relational egalitarianism remains heavily underexplored. My goal in this thesis is to contribute to shed more light on this relationship. Having a good grasp on the relationship between relational egalitarianism and neo-republican justice is important for relational egalitarians, for they have to face different challenges depending on how this relationship turns out to be. For example, if Schmidt (2018) is right, then neo-republican justice and relational egalitarianism are competitors. Relational egalitarians would then need to show why the cases of social relations deemed objectionable by neo-republican justice but not by relational egalitarianism do not qualify as injustices. If, however, Pettit is right, and relating as equals is equivalent to non-domination, then the relational egalitarians would object to the same social relations as neo-republican justice. Relational egalitarians would then need to motivate why the objection should ultimately be about people not relating as equals rather than there being domination. If Anderson (1999), Bengtson, (2021) and Garrau & Laborde (2015) are right, then eradicating domination is indeed necessary to realize the relational ideal of justice, but it is not enough. Relational egalitarians would then need to show what is needed in addition to realize the relational ideal of justice.

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<sup>5</sup> I will use the labels 'equal non-domination' and 'neo-republican justice' interchangeably.

How I exactly I aim to contribute to clarifying the relationship between non-domination and relational egalitarianism is the topic of the next section.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

Due to limited space, I will not be able to address both camps in the literature on the relationship between relational egalitarianism and non-domination. This thesis is an addition to the literature on the question whether non-domination is sufficient for relational equality. I shall answer this question by comparing Pettit's account of justice as non-domination with Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism and thus address their specific disagreement on the question whether non-domination is sufficient for relational equality. The research question of this thesis can thus be stated as follows:

*Sufficiency hypothesis:* Is freedom from domination (as conceived by Pettit) a sufficient condition for relational equality (as conceived by Anderson)?

I shall argue that the answer to this question is 'no'. Before explaining how I aim to argue so, it is important to further delimit the scope of this thesis. I shall do so in the following section.

### SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Both relational egalitarianism and neo-republican justice are concerned with what Pettit calls 'social justice' and 'political legitimacy'. They both arise out of the fundamental challenge which any theory of justice faces, to wit what Rawls described as finding the "proper balance between competing claims" (Rawls, 1971: 9). There is a widespread consensus in the literature on egalitarian justice that the state must express equal degree of respect to its citizens when determining that balance (Pettit, 2012: 78). Social justice is concerned with the question what this means regarding the social order governing citizen's relationship amongst each other. In other words, social justice is about what people are entitled to as a matter of justice with regards to the relationships with fellow citizens (Pettit, 2012: 76). Political legitimacy is concerned with the question how the state expresses equal concern for its citizens in imposing the chosen social order (Pettit, 2012: 76). In this thesis, I will restrict myself to social justice. Apart from limited space, another important reason for this is that Anderson's account of democratic equality is mainly concerned with social justice<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that this is not true with respect to Pettit's account of neo-republican justice. He explains in succinct detail what neo-republican justice requires with respect to political legitimacy.



## OUTLINE

In chapter 1, I will explain Pettit's account of justice as non-domination. I will then explain Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 will be dedicated to the first part of my answer to the sufficiency hypothesis. More precisely, the topic of this chapter will be whether non-domination is able to object to oppressive relationships, one core element of Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism. I shall go through all the different elements of oppressive relationships in the sections 3.2 to 3.4 and argue that every element can be captured by neo-republican justice and that, as a result, non-domination is able to object to oppressive relationships.

The fourth chapter will be dedicated to the question whether non-domination is able to capture equality of opportunity, the second core element of Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism. I shall first clarify how this concept can be embedded in Anderson's approach to relational egalitarianism, for equality of opportunity is traditionally associated with distributive egalitarianism instead of relational egalitarianism. I then discuss two recent contributions which both claim that neo-republican justice is unable to capture equality of opportunity. The first one is a piece by O'Shea (2019) which argues that neo-republican justice is unable to object to a specific violation of equality of opportunity. I shall reject his argument and instead argue that the violation of equality of opportunity which O'Shea has in mind involves an uncontrolled power imbalance and thus domination. I shall then turn to the second contribution on the question whether neo-republican justice is able to object to violations of equality of opportunity, which is by Dougherty (2021). He argues that neo-republican justice is only able to advocate for putting constraints on the power associated with social positions, but not on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position. I shall criticize Dougherty's argument by illustrating that the neo-republican concern of non-domination allows for grounding a concern for people's opportunities. However, as I shall further argue, this is not enough to warrant the conclusion that non-domination captures equality of opportunity. All neo-republican justice allows us to stipulate is that people should have a certain threshold of opportunities, but not that they should benefit from equality of opportunity. For this reason, neo-republican justice is not able to capture the second core element of Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism. The answer to the sufficiency hypothesis is thus that non-domination is not sufficient for relational equality.

## CHAPTER 1: NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The label ‘neo-republican justice’ is arguably rather unusual, since Pettit’s theory of non-domination is primarily known under the labels ‘neo-republican freedom’ or ‘freedom from domination’. Indeed, Pettit originally put forth his ideal of non-domination as a conception of freedom<sup>7</sup>. However, in his later work he extended his idea of non-domination to justice. His conception of justice will be the topic of this chapter.

In section 1.2, I will focus on explaining Pettit’s concept of domination as an agent having uncontrolled power to interfere over another agent. Section 1.2.1 explains what Pettit means by a power to interfere and section 1.2.2 elucidates under what conditions power to interfere is (un)controlled. Section 1.3 concludes this chapter.

### 1.2 PETTIT’S CONCEPTION OF DOMINATION

Pettit’s concept of freedom as non-domination was opposed to a negative conception of freedom, i.e., the view that one is free to the extent that her actions are not being interfered with (Carter 2022). The paradigmatic example with which Pettit elucidated his opposition to this view is the example of a benevolent master who never interferes with his slave. Pettit argued that conceiving of such a slave as free is fundamentally flawed. The neo-republican objection to this example is to say that, even if the master never interferes with her slave, she is unfree insofar as she is dominated by her master. According to Pettit, “someone, A, will be dominated in a certain choice by another agent or agency, B, to the extent that B has a power of interfering the choice that is not itself controlled by A.”<sup>8</sup> (Pettit, 2012: 50). Crucially, the mere power of A to interfere with B’s choices is sufficient to render B unfree, even if A never exercises her power. This is also the reason why the slave in the benevolent master example is being dominated and thus unfree. The underlying normative concern which Pettit has in mind seems to be the following:

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<sup>7</sup> He did so in his famous book “*Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*” (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Another way in which uncontrolled power is described in the republican literature is as “arbitrary power”. Pettit himself used “arbitrary power” in his earlier work but switched to “uncontrolled power” in his later work. While the labels are often used interchangeably, Pettit explicitly prefers “uncontrolled power”: I “shall make little or no use of the term ‘arbitrary’, preferring to speak of uncontrolled interference” (Pettit, 2012: 58). For this reason, I shall prefer “uncontrolled power” over “arbitrary power” as well in this thesis.

*“Will Dependence:* there is something objectionable about social relations in which one person A’s freedoms, and her being able to exercise them, depend on another person B’s will over whether A should have those freedoms or not.” (Schmidt, 2018: 178. Original emphasis).

In his later work, Pettit applied his conception of neo-republican freedom to justice by endorsing the following ideal of social justice:

*Neo-republican ideal of social justice:* justice requires that people should enjoy freedom from domination in their relationships with one another (be it individuals with individuals, groups with groups or individuals with groups) (Pettit, 2012: 77).

We have seen before that domination involves that an agent has or exercises a power to interfere with another agent that is not controlled by the agent subject to it. This raises two questions: what does Pettit conceive of as power to interfere? And what makes such power controlled? I shall turn to these questions in the following two sections.

### **1.2.1 PETTIT’S CONCEPTION OF POWER TO INTERFERE**

According to Pettit, an agent A has power to interfere with an agent B’s choice to the extent that B has power to remove, replace or misrepresent B’s choice options (Pettit, 2012: 46). The most obvious form of power to interfere is the power to remove someone else’s options. If my friend’s initial option set includes, say, options X, Y and Z, and I remove option Z, then I exercise my power to interfere with her choice. A more subtle form of power to interfere is power to replace an option. The standard way in which this happens is through attaching a penalty to the option of the initial choice set. Suppose that I knife the tire of my friend’s bike. Although I do not thereby remove my friend’s option to ride the bike, I attach a penalty to it, to wit that she has to repair or replace the tire so that she can ride her bike. Another way in which I might replace an option of my friend’s choice set is by offering her a reward for choosing a certain option, which she cannot refuse<sup>9</sup>. If I attach a reward for choosing option X and she cannot refuse it, her option set no longer encompasses the options X, Y and Z, but the options X-plus, Y, and Z<sup>10</sup>. The third and arguably most subtle way of power to interfere is power to misrepresent someone else’s choice. One way in which this materializes is

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<sup>9</sup> This scenario is less important than attaching a penalty to an option, since rewards are often refusable. Pettit himself acknowledges that (Pettit, 2012: 53).

<sup>10</sup> Note that if I had given her the option to refuse the reward, the option ‘X-plus’ would have been added to the initial choice set.

through deception. If I deceive my friend about her choice set, her perception of her option set no longer mirrors the option set that she faces as a matter of fact. An obvious example how I could do that is by misinforming you about your options. Another form of misrepresentation is manipulation. By manipulating someone, one thwarts the other's possibility to make a choice based on an appropriate understanding of the options on offer (Pettit, 2012: 55). For example, if I make my friend feel guilty for not choosing my preferred option, I manipulate her.

### 1.2.2 PETTIT'S CONCEPTION OF CONTROL

Another component of Pettit's conception of domination is the idea of *control*. In fact, the question what constitutes control over another agent's power to interfere is one of the main conceptual debates among neo-republicans (Lovett, 2022). This debate involves two main camps: One invokes a procedural account of control, i.e., that power is controlled to the extent that is effectively constrained by rules and procedures (Lovett is the most famous advocate of this position, e.g., in Lovett, 2010). Pettit is in the other camp which endorses a democratic account of control and sees power as effectively constrained to the extent that it is controlled by those subject to it. He illustrates this idea with the following example:

*Alcohol Cupboard:* I give my partner the key to the alcohol cupboard to rein in my drinking. I retain the power to get the key back on a 24-hour notice. (Pettit, 2012: 75 and 171).

My partner's power to interfere with my choice to drink alcohol is not dominating because I still hold sufficient control over her power. My power has two salient aspects: I do retain preventive control in that I can refuse to give the key to my partner in the first place. I also retain abortive control in that I can remove my partner's power once it is in place. More precisely, I can get the key back after 24 hours (Schmidt, 2018: 180). In contrast, the slave in the benevolent master scenario does not have sufficient control over the master's power to interfere with her choices. Unless she voluntarily agreed to becoming her slave, she lacks preventive control. In any case, even if she voluntarily agreed to become a slave of the kindly master, by doing so she gives away future control over this power and thus lacks abortive control (Schmidt, 2018: 180). In more general terms, democratic control requires that people have an effective influence on the terms imposed on them<sup>11</sup>, effective access to means of

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<sup>11</sup> An illustrative example are terms of work. Employees should have a say on the terms of work that are imposed on them. That does not mean that every employee should see her wishes fulfilled in her individual agreement with her employer. One way in which employees say can be ensured are collective agreements

contestation to hold other people's or groups' power to interfere with them accountable to previously agreed rules<sup>12</sup> and exit options<sup>13</sup>.

Pettit's strategy to ensure that people are free from domination in their relationships with one another is to ensure that everyone can make certain choices without having to rely on other's goodwill and – if necessary – with the aid of public resources (Pettit, 2012: 83). Pettit calls these choices 'basic liberties' (Pettit, 2012: 47). More precisely, people's basic liberties should be safeguarded by reliance on public laws and norms (Pettit, 2012: 84). Laws are supposed to provide in an equal manner for the entrenchment of people's basic liberties, but they are not enough. In addition, approval of compliance with these laws and disapproval of non-compliance needs to be established as a matter of shared awareness. This is the job of social norms (Pettit, 2012: 83). Pettit invokes his famous *eyeball test* as a practical guideline to determine what choices should be entrenched<sup>14</sup> and whether the way they are entrenched is suitable.

For example, whether a given state should fund wheelchairs for those who need them and cannot afford them, hinges on whether they could still look their co-citizens "in the eye" without being able to make the choices associated with having a wheelchair at their disposal. The eyeball test thus determines the precise threshold of undominated choice which everyone is entitled to according to neo-republican justice. Note that neo-republican justice does not

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between employers' associations and employees' associations, such as labour unions, which negotiate collective agreements, taking into account relevant interests from both sides.

<sup>12</sup> Employment relationships are again illustrative here: it is not enough for employees to have a say on the terms of work imposed on them, but they also need to have effective access to means of contestation once these terms are in place. That way, the terms imposed on them are held accountable to previously agreed rules (on which employees had effective influence).

<sup>13</sup> Take again the example of employment relationships: one way in which an employee might want to contest her terms of work is simply by quitting her workplace. This presupposes an employee's right to submit her resignation whenever she wants so. However, this is not enough. For employees to make use of this right, they need to have viable alternatives (neo-republicans often use the term 'exit options' as a label for such alternatives). If they depend on staying in their current employment relationship because they lack viable exit options, they are vulnerable to domination by their current employer.

<sup>14</sup> The neo-republican definition of domination as such seems to be too broad to delimit the scope of choices that should be entrenched as basic liberties. To illustrate this, suppose that I share the court with Serena Williams and she is about to serve. Given that she is one of the best servers in the history of tennis and that my returning skills are fairly limited, I seem to be subject to uncontrolled power when trying to return her serve. After all, there does not seem any sense in which I can be said to be able to control her power to thwart my attempts at successful returns of her serve. She could thwart my attempts to return her serve at any time of her choosing. In more technical terms, it seems that Serena Williams has a power to interfere with my capacity at successful return of her serve, which I do not control. Do we think that, as a matter of justice, I should be protected from Williams' uncontrolled power to interfere with my attempts at successful returns? Arguably not.

Pettit is very much aware of this problem and argues that a given choice needs to be co-exercisable and be capable of satisfying everyone. I will not explain his arguments for those criteria here, since whether a thus-qualified choice should be entrenched as a basic liberty is ultimately determined by the eyeball test (Pettit, 2012: 86), the succinct relational element of his account of neo-republican justice.

object to some people having a yet greater range of undominated choice as others as long as everyone passes the eyeball test. In that sense, neo-republican justice takes a *sufficientarian* approach to justice.

### 1.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized Pettit's neo-republican approach to social justice. I first summarized the neo-republican ideal of justice according to which people should enjoy freedom from domination in their relationships with one another (section 1.2). In the following sub-section, I further explained this ideal. In section 1.2.1, I explained Pettit conceives of power to interfere as a power of an agent to remove, replace or misrepresent another agent's options. In section 1.2.2, I explained that power is uncontrolled if those subject to it lack at least one of the following things: influence on the terms imposed on them, access to means of contestation and exit options. I then elucidated how the famous eyeball test serves as a guideline as to whether non-domination is achieved.

Interestingly enough, the idea of the eyeball test, i.e., the idea that people should be able to look others in the eye without fear or deference, is a requirement concerning how people should relate to each other. More precisely, it is a requirement that we should relate to each other as equals, i.e., in such a way that everyone's equal status of a free person is honoured. For this reason, it seems that, according to Pettit, ensuring equal non-domination is equivalent to everyone relating to one another as equals. Anderson disagrees with this view. She thinks that there is more to relational equality than equal non-domination. What exactly relational equality involves in her account will be the topic of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2: RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the explanation of Anderson's pioneering account of relational egalitarianism which she put forth in her famous paper "What is the Point of Equality?" (1999). In section 2.1, I shall explain the dimension along which people should relate as equals according to Anderson. Then I will explain the negative aim of her theory, namely that people should relate to each other in such a way they have the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships (section 2.2). In section 2.3, I will explain the positive aim of her theory, to wit that people should relate to each other in such a way that everybody is granted the capabilities to function as an equal citizen. Based on the explanation of Anderson's theory of relational egalitarianism, we will then be in the position to state in more succinct detail what questions need to be answered in order to confirm or reject the sufficiency hypothesis. I will put forth these questions in section 2.4 and conclude this chapter in section 2.5.

### 2.2 THE DIMENSION OF RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM

In the same way that distributive egalitarians need to say something about what should be distributed equally as a matter of justice ('distribuendum'), relational egalitarians need to say something about the dimension with respect to which people should relate as equals ('relationandum') (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 63). The most prominent 'relationandum' which relational egalitarians invoke is moral standing: people should relate to each other as *moral equals*<sup>15</sup> (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 63). Anderson is one of them. Roughly speaking,

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<sup>15</sup> Relational egalitarians also invoked social standing, epistemic standing or aesthetic standing.

For example, David Miller argued that a society in which people relate as equals is one in which people use "common modes of address" (Miller, 1998: 31), e.g., old people do not call young people 'son' and young people do not call older people 'Sir' etc. Although such different modes of address can be in accordance with the equal moral standing of everyone, they involve an inequality regarding people's social standing.

One main requirement of the idea that people should relate to each other as epistemic equals is the idea that everyone's testimony should receive the same epistemic weight. It objects to testimonial injustice, i.e., that less epistemic weight is given to members of a subordinate group's testimony due to prejudice or power (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 64). It is not easy to disentangle failures to relate as epistemic equals from failures to relate as moral equals, since they often go hand in hand. However, they are conceptually distinct. For example, it could be that we are both disposed to treat each other's interests equally (morally speaking), but that I dismiss your interpretation of what your interests are and instead impose my own interpretation of what they are on you (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 64).

Some relational egalitarians have also taken 'relating as equals' as referring to aesthetic standing. For example, Carina Fourie argued that a society of equals is one without race- or gender-biased aesthetic norms, e.g., when greater emphasis is "placed on how beautiful women are" than on how beautiful men are (Fourie, 2015: 100).

the idea is that people should relate to each other as moral equals means that their relationships should do justice to the equal moral worth of everyone (Anderson, 1999: 312). According to Anderson, this view has both a positive and a negative implication. Anderson fleshes them out in terms of Sen's notion of capabilities. According to Sen, a person's capabilities designate a set of 'functionings' to which she has effective access. 'Functionings' are understood as states of human beings and activities which constitute a person's well-being (Sen, 1995: 39). Examples might be being healthy, literate, happy, respected, getting married, playing good Squash and so forth. In the following sections, I will explain both implications in turn .

### **2.3 THE NEGATIVE IMPLICATION: NO OPPRESSION**

The negative implication is that should relate to each other in such a way that "[...] people are entitled to whatever capabilities are necessary to enable them to avoid or escape entanglement in oppressive social relationships." (Anderson, 1999: 316). Anderson follows Young (1990) by conceiving of an oppressive relationship as entailing one or several of the following elements<sup>16</sup>: violence, marginalization, exploitation, cultural imperialism and domination<sup>17</sup>. A core element which underlies every of these forms of oppressive relationships is that they are group-based. I shall explain what that means in the following section.

#### **2.3.1 OPPRESSION AS A GROUP-BASED PHENOMENON**

The element which underlies violence, marginalization, exploitation, cultural imperialism and domination is that it involves the diminishment of the agency of a social group, as understood by Young (1990). According to Young, neither aggregates (i.e., a classification of people according to an attribute, such as skin colour), nor associations (i.e., a formally organized institution, such as a club) constitute a social group. What constitutes a social group is a "sense of identity" (Young, 1990: 44) rather than shared attributes. For example, what constitutes black Americans as a social group is not their skin colour<sup>18</sup>, but their "identification with a certain social status, the common history that social status produces,

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<sup>16</sup> Young calls them 'faces of oppression'. I will use this expression in what follows as well.

<sup>17</sup> The only concept which is not based on Young's conception of oppression which she put forth her famous book "Justice and the Politics of Difference" (1990) is what Anderson calls 'domination', which is reminiscent of the neo-republican conception of domination, whereas Young's fifth aspect of oppression is 'powerlessness', which means something different. I shall say more on that later.

<sup>18</sup> All the more because people whose skin colour is fairly light identify themselves as Black Americans.



and self-identification that define the group as a group” (Young, 1990: 44). A social group is different from an association in that a social group (partly) constitutes its individuals, whereas individuals constitute an association. If people establish an association, they do so as “already formed” (Young, 1990: 44) persons. Furthermore, people usually enter an association. According to Young, this is different when it comes to a social group: people do not enter a social group, but they are ‘thrown’ into it (Young, 1990: 46). One finds oneself to be member of a social group, and one’s group affinity constitutes various things such as a person’s mode of reasoning or the way feelings are evaluated and expressed (Young, 1990: 45 – 46).

Now the explanations so far suggest that only a group can be subject to the different forms of oppressive relationships. However, this seems unsatisfactory, since Anderson arguably would want to object to, say, the exploitation of one single woman, rather than only to the exploitation of women as a social group. For this reason, it is important to clarify that saying, for instance, that the the social group ‘women’ incurs exploitation (and thus oppression) is not to deny that individual women suffer from exploitation. To say that the social group ‘women’ is exploited is to say that many individual women suffer from a *common harm* (Young, 1990: 64; Bascara, 2020: 142). In other words, an individual woman is exploited to the extent that she is exploited *qua belonging to the social group ‘women’*<sup>19</sup>.

Neither Young nor Anderson clarify any further, what the common condition is that all oppressed people face<sup>20</sup>. For this reason, I shall go through the different forms of oppressive relationships in turn in the following sections.

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<sup>19</sup> Another element which, according to Young, underlies all the different forms of oppressive relationships is that they all involve a structural injustice. The basic idea is that oppression might come about by people following laws and social norms, “minding their own business, and trying to accomplish their legitimate goals” (Young, 2011: 63). Young illustrates this idea with the example of Sandy, who is a single mother working in a mall and facing eviction because a developer bought the building she lives in and wants to convert it into condominiums. Sandy finds few options for housing. The only affordable place she finds are far away from work and necessitate buying a car. She decides to buy a car, only to then discover that she needs a three-month deposit for her new apartment and cannot pay. She finds herself on the brink of homelessness, through no fault of her own, nor necessarily through anyone else’s fault (Young, 2011: 43 and 52).

In fact, the example of Sandy is not only useful in that it illustrates Young’s conception of a structural injustice, but also in that it illustrates well why this feature is not taken up in Anderson’s view on what constitutes an oppressive relationship. The example of Sandy seems to illustrate that one can be subject to injustice even though no one relates to her in an objectionable way. But this goes beyond the scope of relational egalitarianism. What Anderson is interested in is to see in how far the different forms of oppression entail objectionable ways in which people relate to each other.

<sup>20</sup> Young thinks that nothing more specific can be said about the common condition that alle the oppressed people face: “Beyond that [cf. the definition above], in any more specific sense, it is not possible to define a single set of criteria that describe the condition of the oppression of [...] groups” (Young, 1990: 40), arguing that “attempts by theorists and activists to discover a common description or the essential causes of the oppression of all these groups have led to fruitless disputes about whose oppression is more fundamental or

### **2.3.2 THE FIRST FACE OF OPPRESSION: EXPLOITATION**

According to Young, exploitation involves that the exploited “exercise their capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people” (Young, 1990: 49). Following Marx, Young conceives of the paradigmatic example of an exploitative relationship as the one between workers and owners of means of production. Since they do not own any means of production, they often do not have any other option than selling their labour to those who own the means of production – according to the latter’s terms and for latter’s benefit (Young, 1990: 48 – 49).

However, Young stresses that exploitation also takes gender- and racially specific forms. Drawing on work by Ann Ferguson (1989), she argues that women provide men with emotional care and sexual satisfaction, according to men’s terms and needs, while barely receiving any of them in return.

Young cites the highly segmented labour market in the USA, which tends to reserve what she calls ‘menial labour’ to Blacks and Latinos (Young, 1990: 51–52), as an example for racially-specific exploitation. Menial labour refers to work that is instrumental for someone else’s work, whereby only the latter yields recognition and status enhancement. An illustrative example are labourers on a construction site who take orders from skilled workers such as electricians, carpenters or welders, who get all the recognition for the job done (Young, 1990: 52).

### **2.3.3 THE SECOND FACE OF OPPRESSION: MARGINALIZATION**

Marginalization goes further than exploitation in that it involves that people’s labour cannot or will not be used in the first place. One injustice involved in marginalization is material deprivation as a result of people not having a job. Although this issue has in principle been acknowledged in capitalist societies by the establishment of welfare states, marginalization involves a further, more relevant injustice. In a world where useful participation in social life is tied primarily to people’s jobs, people who do not have any job (and who arguably do not have good prospects of getting one), see themselves expelled of the “opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized way” (Young, 1990: 54). However, the mere fact that one sees herself expelled of such opportunities alone does not seem sufficient to

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more grave” (Young, 1990: 40). Instead, Young puts forth different forms of oppression, whereby none of them is more fundamental than the other.

identify marginalization as a succinct relational egalitarian problem<sup>21</sup>. For this to be the case, there must be an agent, whether a group or an individual, that relates to another agent in such a way that the latter is marginalized. An example might be an employer who fires an employee a few years before she would have reached her retirement age, knowing that she barely has any chance to find a job again.

### **2.3.4 THE THIRD FACE OF OPPRESSION: CULTURAL IMPERIALISM**

Whereas the first two forms of exploitation have something to do with the social division of labour (who works for who? Who gets to work to begin with?), cultural imperialism refers to “[...] the universalisation of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm.” (Young, 1990: 59). This means that the perspective of a group, which is subject to cultural imperialism, is not taken as such by the dominant group. Instead, the latter imposes its own perspective on the oppressed group experience as being the relevant one. An obvious way in which cultural imperialism materializes in a relationship is through the stereotyping of members of certain social groups by members of privileged social groups. Examples are the prevalent views “that gays are promiscuous, that Indians are alcoholic, and that women are good with children” (Young, 1990: 59), whereas those stereotypes entail implicit negative judgements, marking deviance from the dominant group’s culture as inferiority. (Young, 1990: 59).

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<sup>21</sup> This point illustrates where the difference between Young’s and Anderson’s view lies. For Young, the mere fact that people see themselves deprived of the opportunity to exercise their capacities in socially defined and recognized ways is enough to constitute an injustice. However, as I shall explain later, Anderson needs to specify in how far an objectionable relationship leads to marginalization. Young’s account does not need this. In fact, this is precisely the idea of her account as objecting to structural injustice. Take again the example of Sandy: her case is objectionable even if no one relates to her in an objectionable way (e.g., through deliberately depriving her of housing opportunities). The same reasoning also applies to marginalization. If someone is expelled from the opportunity to exercise her capacities in socially defined and recognized ways, one is subject to marginalization and thus injustice – even if no one relates to her in an objectionable way. One might object to this by saying that it seems implausible to think of a case of marginalization in which there is no objectionable way in which a group or an individual relates to the marginalized subject involved. This might very well be the case. However, it does not undermine my previous point: Whereas for Young’s account, it is enough to tie the injustice of marginalization to there being a group or an individual without opportunity to exercise their capacity in socially defined and recognized way, Anderson needs to add a relational component to the story. She needs to specify how ‘X relates to Y’ means that Y sees itself deprived of the opportunity to exercise its capacities in socially defined and recognized ways.

### 2.3.5 THE FOURTH FACE OF OPPRESSION: VIOLENCE

Another form of oppression is violence. It encompasses “random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person” (Young, 1990: 61)<sup>22</sup>. Crucially, while every act of violence constitutes a wrongdoing, not every act of violence constitutes an injustice. Only those acts of violence which are systemic are unjust. For an act of violence to be systemic, it needs to be directed at members of a group qua them being members of that very group. What underlies the systemic character of violence is that violence is a “social practice” (Young, 1990: 62), i.e., that it is common knowledge that certain circumstances make violence more ‘called for’ than others (Young, 1990: 62). Examples might be “the idea of rape” occurring to men “who pick up a hitchhiking woman” (Young, 1990: 62) or the idea of “hounding or teasing a gay man on their dorm floor” (Young, 1990: 62) occurring to many “straight male college students” (Young, 1990: 62). Another aspect of violence being a social practice is that offenders often only receive “light or no punishment” (Young, 1990: 62) when they are caught.

### 2.3.6 THE FIFTH FACE OF OPPRESSION: DOMINATION

The fifth form of oppression is domination<sup>23</sup>. According to Anderson, one is dominated to the extent that one lives “at the mercy of others’ wills” (Anderson, 1999: 315). This is reminiscent of the normative concern which underlies neo-republican freedom. We have seen in section 2.2, that what is normatively problematic about being dominated is that whether one can do various things depends on the will of the dominating agent, and not one’s own will. The idea that Anderson has a neo-republican conception of domination in mind becomes even more apparent when she says that equals “govern their lives by their *own will*, which is

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, for Young, not only the actual act of group-based violence is objectionable, but also that members of oppressed social groups have to fear those acts. The reason why I omitted this qualification is that, again, it seems unclear how it could be captured by Anderson’s account of relational egalitarianism. Whereas being subject to an attack clearly involves that the offender relates to the victim, this is unclear regarding the mere fact that one must fear such attacks. In fact, one might have such a fear simply when, say, walking through the streets by night, although no one relates to this person at that moment in any meaningful way.

<sup>23</sup> As I have mentioned already in a previous footnote, Anderson departs from Young when it comes to this form of oppression. Young uses the term ‘domination’, but she does not elucidate it. It seems that she uses it interchangeably with the term ‘oppression’ (Bascara, 2020: 82). For example, she states that “social justice means the elimination of institutional *domination and oppression*” (Young, 1990: 15. Emphasis added.). Instead, she refers to ‘powerlessness’ as an additional form of oppression. What Young conceives of as powerlessness is different from what Anderson has in mind with ‘domination’. As will become clear in what follows, Anderson has a neo-republican conception of domination in mind. This is not what Young means by ‘powerlessness’. In fact, ‘powerlessness’ refers to non-professionals lacking autonomy in their work life, which eventuates in the inhibition of their capacities and disrespectful treatment by professionals. If anything, ‘powerlessness’ designates one form of domination, but surely not the essence of it.

freedom” (Anderson, 1999: 315. Emphasis added.). The idea that one is free to the extent that one is not subject to the power to interfere of an alien will is exactly what neo-republican freedom requires.

#### **2.4 THE POSITIVE IMPLICATION: EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO THE CAPABILITIES NECESSARY TO FUNCTION AS AN EQUAL CITIZEN**

We have explained the negative implication of Anderson’s view that people should relate to each other as moral equals. This section will be dedicated to the explanation of the positive implication of this view. It says that people should relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities “necessary for functioning as an equal citizen” (Anderson, 1999: 317). This requires two things, namely the capabilities to function as a *political agent* and the capabilities to *function as an equal in civil society*<sup>24</sup> (Anderson, 1999: 317).

The ‘functionings’ associated with being a political agent boil down to political participation, such as “voting, engaging in political speech, petitioning government, and so forth” (Anderson, 1999: 317). To ensure that everyone has the capability to those ‘functionings’, people need to have traditional political rights such as “freedom of speech and the franchise” (Anderson, 1999: 318).

Civil society is the sphere of life which is open to the general public. It encompasses public streets and parks, public accommodations (e.g., restaurants, shops, theaters, buses, airlines etc.), communication systems, the Internet, public libraries, hospitals, schools, and so forth (Anderson, 1999: 317). Democratic equality requires that everyone should have access to such public spaces and telecommunications. This might mean that for some people, for example people with a disability, more resources need to be expended for them to have those capabilities. For example, they might need wheelchairs to access public spaces. Accessing public spaces not only presupposes mobility, but also acceptance by others. This is why democratic equality requires “[...] the ability to appear in public without shame.” (Anderson, 1999: 318).

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<sup>24</sup> This distinction might seem awkward at first sight, since it seems that functioning as a political agent is necessary to function as an equal in civil society. Anderson does not address this worry. It seems that she draws this distinction to stress that functioning as a political agent is not enough to function as an equal citizen. For the sake of accurately representing Anderson’s views, I will follow this distinction and leave the concern whether it is substantive or merely illustrative unaddressed.

Another important part of civil society is the economy. After all, firms draw their employees from the general public and sell their products to any customer, which is why the economy is also part of civil society. Functioning as an equal citizen in the economy requires “[...] effective access to the means of production, access to the education needed to develop one’s talents, freedom of occupational choice, the right to make contracts and enter into cooperative agreements with others, the right to receive fair value for one’s labour, and recognition by others of one’s productive contributions” (Anderson, 1999: 318).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I summarized Anderson’s pioneering account of relational egalitarianism. I first clarified the dimension according to which people should relate as equals: they should relate as moral equals, i.e., in such a way that they do justice to the equal moral worth of everyone. I then explained the implications of this view in the subsequent sections. In section 2.3, I explained the negative implication, to wit that people should relate to each other in such a way that they are granted the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships. In section 2.4, I explained the positive implication, namely that people should relate to each other in such a way that they are granted the capabilities to function as an equal citizen.

Whether ensuring non-domination is sufficient for relational equality as conceived by Anderson hinges on whether cases that are deemed unjust according to the latter are also deemed unjust according to the former. If this is the case, the answer to the sufficiency hypothesis is ‘yes’, if not the answer is ‘no’. Given our explanations of both Pettit’s account of neo-republican justice and Anderson’s account of relational egalitarianism, we can specify what questions need to be answered in order to verify the sufficiency hypothesis:

- Does ensuring non-domination safeguard that people relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships?
- Does ensuring neo-republican justice safeguard that people relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities to function as an equal citizen?

I will answer each question in turn in the following two chapters.

## **CHAPTER 3: IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ENOUGH TO AVOID OPPRESSION?**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is dedicated to answering the first component of the sufficiency hypothesis, to wit whether ensuring non-domination safeguards that people relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships. I shall argue that the answer to this question is ‘yes’. More precisely, I will go through each form of oppressive relationship as depicted by Anderson and argue that exploitative relationships (section 3.2), marginalization (section 3.3), cultural imperialism (section 3.4) and violence (section 3.5) are all objectionable according to neo-republican justice.

### **3.2 IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ABLE TO OBJECT TO EXPLOITATIVE RELATIONSHIPS?**

As we have seen in section 2.2.2, exploitation involves that the exploited “exercise their capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people” (Young 1990, 49). To answer the question of this section, we have to investigate whether thus-conceived exploitative relationships involve an uncontrolled power imbalance or not. I shall argue that they do and that, for this reason, non-domination is able to object to exploitative relationships.

To see why exploitative relationships involve domination, it is useful to refer to the example of exploitative relationships that Anderson, following Young, points out. The first one refers to the relation between capitalists and workers in capitalist societies. The latter are exploited in that they have to sell their labour “under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit” (Young 1990, 49) of capitalists. The power at stake here concerns the power to determine the worker’s terms of work. For this power to be controlled by workers, they need to have a directive influence over this power. This means that they need to have an influence on their terms of work which imposes a welcome direction on them. This also implies that those who are subject to power can contest decisions by those in power and that decisions that are not in line with the constraints on power be corrected.

Now, are these conditions fulfilled in the case of the exploitative relationship between capitalists and workers? It is hard to see how. If workers sell their labour “under the control,

according to the purposes and for the benefit” of capitalists, then this arguably entails that determining the terms of work of the workers is fully up to the capitalists and workers do not have any directive influence on them.

The same reasoning also applies to the other examples of exploitative relationships to which Anderson refers: the ones between men and women and skilled workers and unskilled workers.

The former is exploitative in that women provide men with emotional care and sexual satisfaction while barely receiving any of them in return. What makes these relationships dominating is not so much the fact that mainly men get emotional care and sexual satisfaction out of their relationships with women. What makes them dominating is that providing these things happens only according to men’s terms. Accordingly, women lack directive influence on when to provide men with sexual satisfaction and emotional care. In the same way, unskilled workers on a construction site do not have a say on the type of work that they get. They merely execute orders by skilled workers, such as electricians or carpenters.

In sum, what these examples illustrate is that being exploited, i.e., exercising one’s capacities according to the terms and for the benefit of someone else, seems to entail that the exploited are subject to power which they do not control. There does not seem to be a way to be exploited in this sense while having sufficient control over the power of the supposed exploiter. It thus seems that exploitative relationships as understood by Anderson involve domination and that the answer to the question of this section is ‘yes’.

### **3.3 IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ABLE TO OBJECT TO MARGINALIZATION?**

As we have seen in section 2.3.3, marginalization involves that a group or an individual (X) relates to another group or individual (Y) in such a way that the latter has no opportunity to exercise its capacities in socially defined and recognized ways. Whether such a case is objectionable according to equal non-domination hinges on whether it entails an uncontrolled power imbalance or not. In this section, I shall argue that it does.

In fact, it seems hard to think of an example of a relationship involving marginalization, but not domination: how could X possibly relate to Y in such a way that Y is marginalized without X having uncontrolled power over Y? Think of our example of an employer who



fires an employee a few years before she reaches her retirement age. The employee in the example does not seem to have had an influence on the interference by her employer: she did not get a viable alternative option to exercise her capacities in socially defined and recognized ways. So, her employer unilaterally deprived her of this option and thus imposed his will on the employee.

One might object that, while a case such as the previous example involves domination, it only concerns a small subset of cases of marginalization. Arguably, most of the marginalized subjects do not seem to be subject to individuals or groups in their environment who deprive them of the opportunity to exercise their capacities in socially defined and recognized ways. Rather, they are marginalized because their skills are not demanded in the economic context they live in, and they do not have the opportunity to acquire skills which are demanded. This might, for example, come about through members of a privileged social group shaping the economy according to its particular interests, thus ensuring that jobs are reserved for members of the respective social group, while members of other social groups are left out<sup>25</sup>. However, even if someone is not directly socially related to the people shaping the economy in favour of their social group's interests, they still seem to be subject to uncontrolled power. Insofar as they are affected by how the economy is shaped, they are subject to the power of those who are in the position to shape the economy. For such power to be controlled, those who are subject to it need to have a directive influence on how the economy is shaped. However, if how the economy is shaped is solely up to a group composed of members of a privileged social groups, they impose their terms on all the other participants in the economy and thus dominate them.

In sum, it seems that X relating to Y in such a way that Y is marginalized seems to involve that X dominates Y. This seems to be the case both if someone is marginalized because someone else of from this person's social environment marginalizes her or if this person is marginalized because the economy is shaped to her disfavour, although no one in her social environment relates to her in an objectionable way. For this reason, the answer to the question of this section is 'no'.

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<sup>25</sup> One might question whether this is the best case to illustrate that marginalization does not need to result from someone in the marginalized subject's social environment relating to her in an objectionable way. While the scenario where a few people shape the economy according to their interests might capture some of the cases that are left out by the latter picture, it does not encompass all those cases of marginalization which do not result from a few people's deliberate choices. Whether those cases are relevant for a full-fledged analysis of marginalization or not, I omitted them since it seems unclear how they would fit into the relational egalitarian paradigm. If marginalization is not the result of some people's deliberate choices, it seems unclear in how far marginalization is equivalent to one individual or group relating to another group in an objectionable way.

### 3.4 IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ABLE TO OBJECT TO CULTURAL IMPERIALISM?

As we have seen in section 2.3.4, cultural imperialism means that an agent or a group X relates to another agent or group Y in such a way that X imposes its interpretation of social life on Y. In this section, I shall argue that such a relation involves domination.

To see whether equal non-domination is able to object to cultural imperialism, it is useful to refer to a concrete example of cultural imperialism. As Sandra Lee Bartky explained in her book “Femininity and Domination” (1990), women are portrayed by men to exemplify ‘feminine virtues’, such as chastity, docility and servility (Bartky 1990, 23). Women whose behaviour deviates from those stereotypes (e.g., because they exemplify virtues that are seen as being ‘male virtues’, such as assertiveness) are marked as different or even inferior” (Young 1990, 60 and Bartky 1990, 23). It is hard to see how living in such circumstances does not expose women to domination by individual men. Men who are in relationships with women can interfere in women’s choices by making any choices which go against what is seen to be in accordance with ‘femininity’ more burdensome, or possibly even taking away such options, through relying on the dominant view on what women’s role is in society.

One might object that this scenario does not exclude that women have reliable means of contestation against such power. Suppose that, say, Jill would like to take on a full-time job after having given birth to her child. However, her husband Joe aims at preventing her from doing so. He insists on the widespread view in the society they live in that a woman cannot work full-time and fulfil her duties as a mother at the same time, something that Jill cherishes. Surely, Joe exercises a power to interfere with her wife’s choices, by misrepresenting the option ‘taking on a full-time job’. Knowing that Jill cares about being a good mother, he attempts to make her feel guilty for supposedly not complying with the standards of what it means to be a good mother. He thus manipulates her, which is one way to misrepresent an agent’s options (cf. section 1.2.1). Now, while it seems obvious that Joe culturally imperializes Jill by imposing his view on what femininity and motherhood entail on Jill, it seems much less clear whether he thereby dominates her. Whether there is domination in this scenario, hinges on whether Jill has enough control over Joe’s power to manipulate her. More precisely, she needs to be enabled to put her decision to take on a job into action, if necessary, by relying on legal means (e.g., by filing a divorce). Such means need to be readily available for her to have control. At this stage, one might argue that nothing in the description of the example says that such means are not at Jill’s disposal. In

other words, if Jill is able to rely on legal means to put her decision to take on a job into practice, then Joe's manipulation is still arguably morally bad, but it is not a case of domination and thus injustice.

It is very true that the example does not exclude such a case, but it seems questionable as to whether the effective accessibility of legal means to put Jill's decision into practice is enough to dismiss the domination complaint. Of course, equal non-domination would urge for Jill being able to rely on legal means to take on her job, if necessary. But that does not seem enough to avoid domination. In fact, relying on legal means seems like the option that Jill would take only once all other attempts to take on her job have failed. For example, filing a divorce arguably has a big impact on Jill's and her family's life, which is why taking this course of action is attached with high costs. This is also one of the reasons why Pettit emphasizes the role of social norms when it comes to controlling power of interference.

As we have seen in section 1.2.2, Pettit insists that the fundamental basic liberties should be safeguarded "by reliance on public laws *and norms*" (Pettit, 2012: 84. Emphasis added). With respect to the previous example, this means that Jill needs to be able to rely on social norms as well to prevent her husband from hindering her to take on a job. More generally, she needs to live in a society in which social norms encourage mothers to take on jobs in case they want to do so. Taking on a job as a mother is a choice which qualifies as a basic liberty<sup>26</sup> and equal non-domination requires that agents be protected from others power to interfere in the sphere of the basic liberties. It seems questionable as to whether this is the case in the previous example. Recall that Joe bases his interference on a widespread view on what femininity and motherhood entail. In other words, social norms in the society at stake seem to discourage women to exercise their basic liberty to take on jobs as mothers, rather than encouraging them to do so, against the potential interference from their husbands.

More generally, it seems that the very concept of cultural imperialism does not leave room for social norms to play the role of building blocks against domination in people's relationships. As we have seen in section 2.3.4, cultural imperialism means that the interpretation of social life of a privileged social group is dominant. This is equivalent to members of such groups having power to impose their interpretation of social life on others. In neo-republican terms, this means they have power to interfere with any choice of other agents that is not in accordance with this interpretation. Now, how can this power be

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<sup>26</sup> This choice is both co-exercisable capable of satisfying everyone.

controlled if the interpretation of social life by a privileged social group is *dominant*? Cultural imperialism means that those who are subject to it cannot rely on social norms to contest the power of interfere by those who culturally imperialize others. After all, their interpretation of social life is not heard in their society. They can hope that their perspective is compatible with the perspective of the privileged social group, but that does not give them control over the latter's power to interfere. They are still at the mercy of the perspective of the privileged social group to be in their favour.

In sum, cultural imperialism seems to entail domination. Cultural imperialism gives members of privileged social groups power to interfere with choices of members of other social groups that are not in accordance with their interpretation of social life. This power is not controlled by those subject to it, as their interpretation of social life is not heard and taken as such. For this reason, the answer to the question of this section is 'yes'.

### **3.5 IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ABLE TO OBJECT TO VIOLENCE?**

As we have seen in section 2.3.5, Anderson conceives of violence as a phenomenon where members of a given social group are subject to random and systemic attacks qua them being members of that very social group. In this section, I argue that victims of such attacks are subject to uncontrolled power and thus domination.

The power to which victims of systemic group-based violence are subject to can only be said to be controlled if victims have access to legal means of contestation and if social norms encourage victims to take them and deter potential offenders to proceed to violence in the first place. It is hard to see how Anderson's conception of violence can be seen to be in accordance with these criteria. Violence is a "social practice" (Young, 1990: 63) which is widely tolerated: "Often third parties find it unsurprising because it [violence] happens frequently and lies as a constant possibility at the horizon of the social imagination" (Young, 1990: 62). It is hard to think of such a society as having the social norms that enable victims of violence to contest acts of violence. If violence is taken as a given in a society, then it does not seem that potential offenders are deterred from proceeding to violence (e.g., because offenders are being hindered to attack others by surrounding people) or victims empowered enough to take action against offenders.

Furthermore, it also seems that the legal checks against violence, which give victims control over offenders' power to inflict violence, are not in place in Anderson's conception of

violence. For this to be the case, victims would need effective access to hold offenders accountable. However, systemic group-based violence is not only a social practice in that social norms normalize group-based violence in a given society. It is also a social practice in that offenders are often not held accountable for their acts: “Even when they are caught, those who perpetrate acts of group-directed violence or harassment often receive light or no punishment. To that extent society renders their acts acceptable” (Young, 1990: 62).

In sum, it is hard to see how systemic group-based violence as depicted by Anderson is non-dominating. For power to inflict violence to be non-dominating, victims need to live in a society in which social norms have a deterrent effect on potential offenders and in which victims are encouraged to take action against them. Furthermore, effective legal means need to be accessible and ensure that offenders are held accountable. All these criteria do not seem to be met in the description of group-based systemic violence, which is why the answer to the question of this section seems to be ‘yes’.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was concerned with the question whether equal non-domination is able to object to people or groups relating to each other in an oppressive way. I argued that the answer to this question is ‘yes’. More precisely, I examined for each face of oppression whether equal non-domination is able to object to it and reached the conclusion that the answer is always ‘yes’.

Based on three examples of exploitative relationships pointed out by Young (1990), I argued that exercising one’s capacities “under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people” (Young 1990, 49) is incompatible with the exploited having control over the power of those who exploit them.

I then argued that the second form of oppressive relationships, marginalization, is also incompatible with equal non-domination. It entails the deprivation of the option to exercise one’s capacities in socially defined and recognized ways. I argued that, since this deprivation happens unilaterally, without the needs of those who are subject to marginalization been considered, those who are marginalized are subject to domination.

I subsequently argued that equal non-domination is also able to object to cultural imperialism. More precisely, I argued that cultural imperialism gives members of privileged social groups power to make other agents' options that are not in accordance with their interpretation of social life more burdensome. While cultural imperialism leaves room for the availability of legal means of contestation against this power, it does not seem to be in accordance with social norms doing the job of preventing domination in the sphere of basic liberties. For this reason, I argued, cultural imperialism is objectionable according to equal non-domination.

Finally, I also argued that the equal non-domination deems the last form of oppressive relationships, violence, objectionable as well. More precisely, I argued that insofar as group-based, systemic violence is seen as a social practice, victims do not control offenders' power to inflict violence on them. In particular, social norms do not seem to have a deterring effect on potential offenders and do not encourage victims to take action against them. Furthermore, since such violence is often left unpunished or inaccurately punished, offenders are not accurately held accountable by the legal system.

In sum, the answer to the question whether equal non-domination is able to object to individuals or groups relating to other groups or individuals in an oppressive way is 'yes'. Whether equal non-domination is sufficient for relational equality thus hinges on whether it also captures the positive aim of Anderson's theory. The following chapter will be dedicated to providing an answer to this question. I shall argue that equal non-domination is not able to object to certain violations of the aim that individuals and groups relate to each other in such a way that everyone has the capability to function as an equal citizen and that, for this reason, equal non-domination is not sufficient for relational equality.

## **CHAPTER 4: IS NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE ENOUGH FOR PEOPLE TO RELATE AS EQUAL CITIZENS?**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I shall put forth an answer to the question whether equal non-domination is able to object to violations of the positive aim of Anderson's theory of relational egalitarianism. More precisely, I shall argue that equal non-domination is not able to object to certain violations and that, as a result, equal non-domination is not sufficient for relational equality.

Since the negative aim of Anderson's theory of democratic equality overlaps with the positive aim to a large extent, I will have to identify a case which violates the positive aim, but not the negative one. Section 4.2 is dedicated to this task. I will explain that, according to Anderson, violations of equality of opportunity are such cases and what conception of equality of opportunity she has in mind.

In section 4.3, I will motivate the connection between equality of opportunity, a concept which has traditionally been endorsed by distributive egalitarians, and relational egalitarianism. I will argue that Cohen's principle of interpersonal justification bridges the supposed gap between equality of opportunity and relational egalitarianism.

Section 4.4 is dedicated to the question whether equal non-domination is able to object to violations of equality of opportunity as understood by Anderson. I will first motivate why Pettit seems to think that the answer to this question is 'yes' (section 4.4.1) before focusing on two recent contributions that aim to shed light on the relationship between equal non-domination and equality of opportunity. O'Shea's argument (section 4.4.2) points out that equal non-domination is unable to object to violations of formal equality of opportunity which involve an omitted offer. In section 4.4.3, I shall argue that O'Shea's argument needs to be rejected, as the violations of equality of opportunity he has in mind entail an uncontrolled power imbalance. In section 4.4.4, I shall present the second contribution on the relationship between equality of opportunity and equal non-domination, which is from Dougherty (2021). He argues that equal non-domination only allows for putting constraints on social positions, but not on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position. For this reason, equal non-domination is unable to object to violations of equality of opportunity. In section 4.4.5, I challenge this claim by putting forth a neo-republican response to it. In particular, I shall argue that equal non-domination does not only urge for

putting constraints on social positions, but also for equality of opportunity. In section 4.4.6, I reject this objection, by arguing that the sufficientarian element in neo-republican justice is an insurmountable obstacle when it comes to putting forth a neo-republican justification of equality of opportunity. Section 4.5 concludes this chapter.

#### **4.2 HOW ANDERSON'S POSITIVE AIM DIFFERS FROM HER NEGATIVE AIM**

As I have said in the previous section, the negative aim of Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism overlaps with the positive aim to a large extent. However, they are not equivalent. What matters for this section is that we identify cases which are captured by the latter, but not the former. More precisely, we need a case which is objectionable *not* because it denies a person's capability to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships, but because it denies her capability to function as an equal citizen.

Anderson herself provides us with such a case, when she says that "if having the capabilities needed to avoid oppression were all that mattered, then egalitarians would not oppose discrimination among the relatively privileged – for example, the glass ceiling for female executives. But egalitarians also aim at enabling all citizens to stand as equals to one another in civil society, and this requires that careers be open to talents." (Anderson 1999, 316 – 317). Anderson does not specify what specific principle of equality of opportunity she has in mind. While the slogan "careers open to talents" has often been used as equivalent to the principle of formal equality of opportunity (Arneson 2015), i.e., the idea that "positions and posts that confer superior advantages should be open to all applicants" (Arneson 2015), I suppose that Anderson had a more substantive version of equality of opportunity in mind. In fact, formal equality of opportunity has a fairly limited scope in that it allows for one's social background to influence one's chances to get a position<sup>27</sup>. It seems plausible to assume that Anderson had a principle of equality of opportunity in mind which captures the intuition that one's social background should not influence one's prospects of success to get a certain position. Rawls criticizes formal equality of opportunity for precisely this reason and puts forth his principle of fair equality of opportunity in response. This principle requires that any individuals with the same talent and the same ambition will have the same prospects of success in competitions for advantageous positions (Rawls, 1971: 63). It seems plausible to assume that the glass ceiling for female executives is not only due to violations of formal equality of

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<sup>27</sup>Whenever I refer to 'positions' in what follows, what I have in mind is "positions and posts that confer superior advantages" as depicted by Arneson (2015).



opportunity, but also to factors which fair equality of opportunity captures. For this reason, I will assume that Anderson has fair equality of opportunity in mind<sup>28</sup>.

At this stage, one might wonder how equality of opportunity can be embedded in a relational approach to egalitarianism. After all, it seems much more intuitive to think of equality of opportunity as pertaining to distributive egalitarianism. For example, one of the early advocates of distributive egalitarianism, Richard Arneson, championed the idea that the ‘distribuendum’ should be opportunities for welfare (cf. Arneson 1989). As equality of opportunity is typically associated with distributive egalitarianism, I shall clarify the relationship between equality of opportunity and relational egalitarianism in the following section.

### **4.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM**

Anderson does not spell out explicitly how the idea of equality of opportunity relates to her account of relational egalitarianism. One way to make sense of this is to say that Anderson endorses a pluralist egalitarian position, i.e., that she endorses both of the following positions:

“*Foundational relational egalitarianism*: What makes a situation just is the fact that everyone relates as equals.” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 216).

“*Foundational equality of opportunity distributive egalitarianism*: What makes a situation just is the fact that a certain good X is distributed equally.” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 216).

Anderson only positions herself as a relational egalitarian in that “democratic egalitarians are fundamentally concerned with the relationships within which goods are distributed [cf. ‘foundational relational egalitarianism’ above], *not only* with the distribution of goods themselves” (Anderson, 1999: 314.). All that this means is that Anderson is opposed to endorse *only* distributive egalitarianism on a fundamental level. It leaves open the possibility that both relational egalitarianism and distributive egalitarianism hold on a fundamental level. Although she does not reject this position explicitly, it seems more plausible to assume that, fundamentally, Anderson *only* endorses relational egalitarianism. After all, Anderson very much emphasizes the contrast between her position and ‘equality of fortune’ throughout “What is the Point of Equality?” (1999). It is hard to think of Anderson, who puts forth an

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<sup>28</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, I will have such a notion of equality of opportunity in mind when using the term ‘equality of opportunity’ in what follows.

uncompromising and “scathing critique of luck egalitarianism” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 213) as deep down embracing a pluralist egalitarian position – all the more in light of the fact that such a position has been articulated for the first time only much later (by Lippert-Rasmussen in “Relational egalitarianism: Living as equals” (2018)).

How can we then make sense of Anderson’s position? After all, the distribution of goods does play an important role in her conception of relational egalitarianism. For instance, she states that “democratic equality is *also* concerned with the distribution of divisible resources” (Anderson, 1999: 320. Emphasis added.) and by advocating equality of opportunity, she puts forth a principle which has typically been advocated by distributive egalitarians. The most obvious way in which Anderson’s worry about distribution can be accommodated within a foundational relational egalitarian view is by showing that equal distributions are required for people to relate as equals. With regards to the aim of this section, the challenge is to understand in how far equality of opportunity is required for people to relate as equals. A helpful pointer is Anderson’s description of the contrast between democratic equality as a theory of relational equality and equality of fortune as a theory of distributive equality:

“Equality of fortune regards two people as equal as long as they enjoy equal amounts of some distributable good [...]. By contrast, *democratic equality regards two people as equals when each accepts the obligation to justify their actions by principles acceptable to the other, and in which they take mutual consultation, reciprocation and recognition for granted*” (Anderson, 1999: 313. Emphasis added.).

Anderson reiterates this idea, which Anderson takes up from Cohen (cf. his famous principle interpersonal justification which he put forth in *Incentives, inequality, and community* (1992)), again when elucidating the idea that everyone should have the capabilities to function as an equal citizen. When fleshing out the implications of this idea regarding the economy, Anderson states that

“workers *accept* the demand of [...] *the principle of interpersonal justification*: any consideration offered as a reason for a policy must serve to justify that policy when uttered by anyone to anyone else who participates in the economy as a worker or a consumer. The principles that govern the division of labour and the assignment of particular benefits to the performance of roles in the division of labour must be acceptable to everyone in this sense” (Anderson, 1999: 322. Emphasis added).

Clearly, the idea of an interpersonal justification among participants in the economy has something to do with how they relate to each other. In that sense, what matters regarding equality of opportunity is not the distribution of opportunities in itself. Rather, equality of opportunity is important because whenever it obtains, participants in the economy who did not get an advantageous position in the social division of labour and demand a justification from co-participants who got such a position can be told by the latter that a reason for them not having gotten this position is that they too had equally good opportunities initially which they did not take advantage of (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 215). In other words, people who got a given position relate as equals to people who did not get the position in question just in case the latter also had the opportunity to get them.

In sum, it seems that the most natural way to make sense Anderson's idea that the positive aim of democratic equality requires equality of opportunity as part of her relational approach to egalitarianism is by conceiving of equality of opportunity as a prerequisite for people to meet the test of interpersonal justification in relation with each other.

Having clarified how equality of opportunity can be embedded in Anderson's theory of relational egalitarianism, we are now set to turn to the question whether equal non-domination is able to object to equality of opportunity or not.

#### **4.4 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND NEO-REPUBLICAN JUSTICE**

##### **4.4.1 PETTIT'S VIEW**

We have seen in section 2.2 that, according to Pettit, non-domination is the master value of neo-republican justice: if equal non-domination is secured, the demands of neo-republican justice are met. This means that any other value of justice will be taken care of once equal non-domination is secured. Pettit does not state explicitly whether equality of opportunity is among those values, but his explanations on how Rawls' theory of justice relates to neo-republican justice suggest that it is. Pettit argues that Rawls needs to complement his first principle of justice (i.e., the idea that everyone has an equal right to what Rawls calls 'basic liberties'<sup>29</sup>) with a principle that socioeconomic inequalities are to satisfy fair equality of

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<sup>29</sup> Basic liberties include political liberty (i.e., the right to vote and to hold public office), freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of the person (i.e., freedom from psychological oppression, physical assault and dismemberment), the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure (Rawls, 1971: 53).

opportunity and the difference principle<sup>30</sup> because his freedom-based principle is not demanding enough. Whereas equal non-domination requires resources to make freedom as non-domination effective, Rawls does not have such a requirement (Rawls, 1971: 204-5). In addition, Rawls seems to think that there needs to be a guard against interference by others only if it is likely to occur (Rawls, 1971: 240), whereas equal non-domination asks for robust protection independently of how likely power to interfere is exercised or not. For these two reasons, Pettit concludes that

“It should be no surprise that while Rawls needs to supplement the principle ordaining equality in freedom with a principle requiring that socioeconomic resources should be more or less equal, *republican theory does not have to look beyond the demands of freedom alone*. The theory interprets freedom in a richer manner than Rawls and so, unsurprisingly, it is capable of building a suitable account of social justice *on the requirements of freedom and freedom alone*; it does not have to introduce an independent concern with socioeconomic equality” (Pettit, 2014: 103. Emphasis added).

What Pettit seems to suggest here is that there is no need to invoke a separate principle regarding equality of opportunity<sup>31</sup>, since the neo-republican requirement of equal non-domination already captures this concern. Pettit seems to take this for granted, as he does not explain how exactly equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity. This is somewhat surprising, since the connection between the neo-republican concern for inter-generational power imbalances and the concern for people’s opportunities seem fairly different. The connection between equal non-domination and equality of opportunity is thus not obvious.

In that sense, it is even more surprising that this connection has not been investigated in further detail. In fact, so far, only O’Shea’s piece “Are Workers dominated” (2019) and Dougherty’s paper “Republicanism, Justice, and Equality of Opportunity” (2021) took up this

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<sup>30</sup> The idea that socioeconomic inequalities need to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (Rawls, 1971: 53).

<sup>31</sup> Another reading of the quote above might be that Pettit does not add Rawls’ second principle because it goes too far. There is evidence for such a reading in Pettit’s oeuvre. One striking example is the following: “In one respect the demands [of equal non-domination] are not as extensive as Rawls’s, for his second principle of justice would look for material equality up to the point, possibly hard to reach, where allowing a degree of relative inequality would improve the absolute returns to the worst-off position.” (Pettit, 2014: 107). However, Pettit’s objection seems to pertain to the difference principle and not equality of opportunity.

question. Both pieces argue against Pettit's tacit assumption that equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity. O'Shea's argument points out a specific violation of formal equality of opportunity, which he contends equal non-domination cannot object to. Dougherty claims that the neo-republican concern for constraining power associated with social positions does not capture the concern who gets to occupy those positions – which is a major concern for equality of opportunity. In the following sections, I aim to shed light on whether equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity, as Pettit seems to suggest, by scrutinizing O'Shea's and Dougherty's arguments.

I will present O'Shea's argument in section 4.4.2. I will subsequently argue that O'Shea's argument does not hold water (section 4.4.3). More precisely, I shall argue that the violation of formal equality of opportunity on which his argument relies involves an uncontrolled power imbalance and can thus be captured by equal non-domination.

Section 4.4.4 will then be dedicated to the explanation of Dougherty's argument. I will then come up with objections which neo-republicans might raise in response to Dougherty's argument (section 4.4.5) and conclude that, while these objections point out a shortcoming of Dougherty's argument, they ultimately fail to establish that equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity (section 4.4.6).

#### **4.4.2 O'SHEA'S ARGUMENT: WHY EQUAL NON-DOMINATION FAILS TO CAPTURE (FORMAL) EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

Roughly speaking, O'Shea's argument points out that equal non-domination is unable to capture a specific instance of a violation of equality of opportunity, namely an *omitted offer*. To illustrate his point, take the following example:

*Unpublicized Job Advertisement:* a firm does not publicize a job advertisement for a job vacancy, but instead gives the job to a member of the owner family, thus depriving others of a chance to apply for the job.

The firm in this example clearly violates equality of opportunity. The reason why O'Shea thinks that such a case cannot be captured by equal non-domination is that the employer's recruitment power in the example does not seem to fall under the neo-republican conception of a power to interfere. As we have seen in section 2.2.1, for power to interfere to be

dominating, it needs to be power to remove, replace or misrepresent an agent's options. O'Shea's point is to say that a violation of equality of opportunity such as in the example *is not concerned with an agent's existing choice set, but with her enhanced choice set* (O'Shea, 2019: 6). By publicizing a job advertisement, employers enhance the choice set of potential job applicants with the option 'applying for job X'. Conversely, by not doing so, employers fail to enhance these people's choice set. Crucially, however, they do not interfere with an agent's existing choice set.

The worry articulated in O'Shea's argument is reminiscent of the broader issue that an omitted offer does not seem to fit the neo-republican focus on agent's existing choice set. Pettit is aware of this problem and addressed it in his earlier work in which he argues that an omitted offer might very well constitute domination. To illustrate this, he put forth the example of a pharmacist who refuses to sell an urgently required medicine to someone without a good reason (Pettit, 1997: 53). In such a case, the omitted offer is arguably such that it also affects an agent's existing choice sets (although only indirectly).

Given the importance of having a job to be able to have an important array of options, one might argue that an omitted offer for a job vacancy such as in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* falls under the neo-republican definition of domination as well. However, the problem with this proposed way out of the omitted offer issue is that one would have to establish that an omitted job offer affects an agent's existing choice set *in principle*. While it seems clear that this link holds in some circumstances (e.g., in a context in which there is no social safety net and a shortage of available jobs), it is much less obvious that it holds in others (e.g., in a context in which there is a strong social safety net and employers compete for the labor of employees). In any case, Pettit never offered such a principled connection, and it seems far from obvious how such a connection would look like.

In sum, it seems that certain violations of formal equality of opportunity, such as the one in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement*, cannot be captured by equal non-domination, since they constitute a failure to enhance an agent's choice set, rather than an interference with their existing choice set. While some failures to enhance an agent's choice set might constitute such an interference in some circumstances, this might not be the case in other circumstance. As a result, there does not seem to be a principled connection between an omitted offer and interference with an agent's existing choice set.

#### 4.4.3 AGAINST O'SHEA: WHY EQUAL NON-DOMINATION CAPTURES FORMAL EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The difficulty with the strategy to establish a principled connection between an omitted job offer and an agent's existing choice set points us at a limitation of Pettit's conception of a power to interfere, in particular to its focus on an agent's existing choice set. However, it still seems that the specific inequality of opportunity involved in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* seems problematic from a neo-republican perspective. After all, the hiring decision in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* strikes us as intuitively arbitrary and equal non-domination is concerned precisely with eradicating arbitrariness in power relations.

Now, the intuition that the hiring decision in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* is arbitrary could be spelled out in several ways. One way is to say that whether one is related to the owner family of an employer should not have an influence on whether one is given a job or not – in that sense, this aspect is arbitrary from a moral point of view. This intuition is reminiscent of Rawls' rationale behind his principle of fair equality of opportunity, namely that the influence of morally arbitrary factors on one's distributive shares should be eradicated (Rawls, 1971: 63). Following Rawls, scholars such as G. A. Dworkin and Ronald Dworkin further developed this idea and argued that any unchosen elements should count as morally arbitrary and thus not have any influence on people's distributive shares<sup>32</sup>. However, conceiving of the arbitrariness intuition in *Unpublicized Jobs Advertisement* in that way does not reflect the neo-republican objection to arbitrariness in power relations. Pettit explicitly rejects the claim that justice requires the eradication of morally arbitrary influences on one's distributive shares: “Nor are the republican demands as extensive in this way as those of even more egalitarian theories that seek, for example, the elimination of all the effects of brute luck<sup>33</sup> on people's fortunes” (Pettit, 2014: 107). This does not mean that Pettit is committed to deny the intuitive appeal of the claim that one's distributive shares should not be influenced by unchosen, supposedly arbitrary factors, such as one's gender. But the problem is that it is unclear what this intuition tells us about power imbalances<sup>34</sup>. Another problem

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<sup>32</sup> This position has later come to known under the label 'luck egalitarianism'.

<sup>33</sup> Roughly speaking, effects of brute luck are effects that do not arise out of an agent's choices (Dworkin, 2000: 73).

<sup>34</sup> I am not denying that a connection between the influence on unchosen factors on one's distributive shares and uncontrolled power imbalances cannot be established. In fact, it seems plausible to assume that excessive power imbalances might give raise to unchosen factors influencing people's distributive shares. An example might be an economic elite which hoards lucrative social positions and thereby deprives people who are not in this elite to get such positions and the associated advantages. However, such a connection would have to be fleshed out and

with this interpretation is the focus on moral arbitrariness. To grasp whether something is morally arbitrary, one needs to settle on questions what is morally right or wrong, just or unjust (McCammom, 2018). In contrast, to identify whether there is domination or not, equal non-domination only needs to settle the following, supposedly descriptive, matters (MacCammon, 2018): is there a capacity for choice interference between agents? Is this capacity accurately controlled by those who are subject to it?<sup>35</sup>

However, there is another way to make sense of the intuition that *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* involves an arbitrary hiring decision. The arbitrariness in this example could also be understood as the person who takes this decision having too much discretion. In other words, if an employer hires someone based on her family background, this strikes us as there being too much up to the *arbitrium* ('will') of the employer<sup>36</sup>. This means that the hiring decision is merely up to the will of the employer and those who are affected by this decision depend on this will being in accordance with their interests. Whether this is the case is obviously up to the agent embodying this will, which is the employer. In that sense, those who are affected by the employer's decision cannot be said to have any control over the employer's recruitment power. Pettit himself conceives of arbitrariness in the sense mentioned before as being equivalent to uncontrolled power:

"The republican lesson about uncontrolled interference has often been formulated in the claim that, provided it is non-arbitrary, interference does not subject you to an alien will. *Arbitrary interference, on this interpretation, is interference practised in accordance with the arbitrium, or 'will', of another. It is precisely what I describe here as uncontrolled*

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the mere intuition that one's distributive shares should not be influenced by factors that are beyond one's choice alone does not do this job.

<sup>35</sup> While it seems uncontroversial to assume that the answer to the first question requires a mere descriptive enquiry, this is less clear with regards to the answer to the second question. As we have seen in section 1.2.2, Pettit's conception of control is essentially a conception of democratic control. A non-moralized account of domination thus requires that democratic control be understood merely descriptively. This is not necessarily a problem. For example, to identify whether I have sufficient control over your capacity to rein in my drinking in the *Alcohol Cupboard* example can surely be established descriptively. However, there are other cases where this is less clear. An example is the citizenry's control over the states' capacity to interfere with it, which is required to establish neo-republican political legitimacy. Pettit argues that popular control needs to be shared equally among citizens (Pettit, 2012: 153). It is not obvious to me whether we can identify whether popular control meets this requirement without assumptions about fairness.

<sup>36</sup> One might argue that if the employer takes such a decision, she herself might be dependent on the goodwill of the owner family and be dominated herself. This is a fair point. But I do not think it undermines the idea that in such a case, potential job seekers are dependent on the arbitrium of someone else – whether it is the employer or a member of the owner family. For the sake of simplicity, I will thus continue to talk of the employer as having uncontrolled power over potential job applicants.



*interference*: that is, interference that is exercised at the will or discretion of the interferer; interference that is uncontrolled by the person on the receiving end” (Pettit, 2012: 58. Emphasis added).

In sum, independently of whether *Unpublicized Job Advertisement* can be captured by the neo-republican conception of interference, it involves a power imbalance between the employer and potential job applicants which is uncontrolled by the latter and thus objectionable according to equal non-domination. While O’Shea’s argument succinctly calls into question the specific neo-republican conception of a power to interfere, I contend that it does not establish that there is no domination in *Unpublicized Job Advertisement*. The reason for this is that the hiring decision in the example is entirely up to the will of the employer.

#### **4.4.4 DOUGHERTY’S ARGUMENT: WHY EQUAL NON-DOMINATION DOES NOT CAPTURE EQUALITY OPPORTUNITY**

Whereas O’Shea’s argument took issue with the claim that equal non-domination is able to object to violations of formal equality of opportunity, Dougherty (2021) is concerned with whether it is able to object to violations of fair equality of opportunity as conceived by Rawls (Dougherty, 2021: 111). He argues that equal non-domination does not have the tools to object to the specific injustice involved in inequality of opportunity and that, for this reason, it does not capture equality of opportunity. His argument can be illustrated with the following example<sup>37</sup>:

*Superior Education*: Suppose that two individuals, Kevin and Urs, both apply for a prestigious position as civil servant. They are equally talented and have the same ambition to use their talents. Both their documents in support of their application are evaluated only based on criteria that are relevant for the job. In the end, Kevin gets the job. The crucial factor was Kevin’s education. Kevin is the heir of an entrepreneur family and was able to take an elite preparation course for future civil servants. Urs would have liked to take this course as well, but he did not inherit anything and was not able to afford it<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> The example is based upon several examples which Dougherty puts forth on p. 114.

<sup>38</sup> For the sake of argument, I assume, following Dougherty, that the income and wealth inequality between Urs and Kevin is such that Kevin does not dominate Urs. I also assume that the income and wealth inequality between Kevin’s family and Urs’ family meets this requirement. Another assumption which I make is that the salary and power associated with the civil servant position does not yield Kevin uncontrolled power over Urs (Dougherty, 2021: 114).

Whereas the example involves a clear violation of equality of opportunity (Kevin's success is partly due to his socio-economic background), it is far from obvious that it also involves domination. In particular, there does not seem to be any reason to suppose that Kevin dominates Urs merely by successfully competing in meritocratic hiring procedures (Dougherty, 2021: 114). Furthermore, the possibility that the outcome of this procedure yields Kevin uncontrolled power over Urs is ruled out by assumption. Of course, *Superior Education* is overly simplistic in many ways. It leaves out many aspects which are necessary for an economy to function (e.g., who plays the role of the state?) and which are of neo-republican concern. Dougherty is aware of these limitations (Dougherty, 2021: 115), but he thinks it nicely illustrates the following argument:

1. Neo-republican justice places various constraints on the structure of positions in a society, but not on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position.
2. Equality of opportunity puts constraints on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position.

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(C) Neo-republican domination does not fully capture equality of opportunity

Institutions in actual societies create a structure of job positions with positions which vary in terms of their burdens and benefits. Burdens associated with a job position typically concern the types and amounts of work, whereas benefits include salary, perks, prestige, power and authority (Dougherty, 2021: 115). Both aspects might lead to domination if they are left unconstrained: think of managers who use their authority to benefit from their employees for purposes that are not job-related or an economy in which decent salaries are only tied to very few jobs. As a result, equal non-domination requires that the benefits and burdens of job positions are subject to various constraints: for instance, salaries for different positions need not diverge to an extent that low-wage earners are dominated by high-wage earners and workplace authority needs to be limited to work-relevant aspects and reliable means of contestation need to be accessible for those subject to this authority. In sum, equal non-domination puts wide-ranging constraints on the permissible structures of positions in a society. It thus ensures that no occupier of a given job position is either dominated or a dominator.

However, Dougherty argues, the issue whether the structure of job positions is constrained to an extent that no occupier of a given job position is either dominated or a dominator is *different* from the “processes that determine the permutation of individuals that occupy these positions” (Dougherty, 2021: 115). In other words, equal non-domination urges for constraining job positions, *whoever occupies them*. Which “flesh-and-blood humans” (Dougherty, 2021: 115) occupy which position is irrelevant for the requirement that job positions be accurately constrained (Dougherty, 2021: 115).

The question which individual gets to occupy a certain position is obviously of concern for equality of opportunity. In contrast to neo-republican non-domination, equality of opportunity puts constraints on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position, by requiring that everyone has an equal opportunity to get a certain position.

#### **4.4.5 A NEO-REPUBLICAN RESPONSE TO DOUGHERTY’S ARGUMENT**

Whereas premise 2 seems uncontroversial, it seems far from obvious whether premise 1 holds. One might take issue with the assumption that equal non-domination only places constraints on social positions. Of course, this is a significant aspect of equal non-domination, but it surely is not the only one. In fact, as I shall argue in this section, constraints on who gets to occupy a given position can be justified on neo-republican grounds. More precisely, I shall argue that equality of opportunity can be justified as a safeguard of people’s exit options, an important building block against domination.

Something which neo-republicans emphasized repeatedly when elaborating on how people can become trapped in dominating relationships is people’s exit options (MacCammon, 2018 and Lovett, 2010: 39-40). Roughly speaking, the idea is that if an agent has no other viable option than to stay in a current relation, the other agent might exploit that fact and impose her will on the other agent. As the other agent lacks viable alternatives, she has no other options but to accept the imposed terms and is thus subject to domination. This phenomenon might occur in a variety of relations, such as employment, marriage or friendship. As it has typically been explained with respect to employment, I will restrict myself to employment as well in what follows. Equality of opportunity is concerned with ensuring that people’s social background is not a hindrance for people to bring their talents to fruition. This is an important ingredient for employees to have reliable exit options and thus to avoid domination by their employers. For example, if members of a marginalized social group systematically lack the

ability to bring their talents to fruition, they are under pressure to stay in their current employment relation because they do not have any other option. This can then be exploited by employers, yielding them uncontrolled power over the employees in question.

Dougherty would probably object to this example, arguing that in such a scenario, domination could be avoided by putting constraints on the power associated with social positions. With respect to the previous example, this would mean that employers' power to unilaterally determine the terms of work of their employees would have to be constrained and that employees' rights to contest employer's decisions would need to be entrenched on a public basis and be made readily available. Once these constraints are in place, it is hard to see what else is needed to combat domination.

Of course, constraining employers' power and entrenching means of contestation is crucial to avoid domination in the sphere of employment. But this does not undermine the point that equality of opportunity is an important building block against domination as well. In fact, the example before leads to an uncontrolled power imbalance precisely because one agent sees her options constrained in such a serious manner that she has no other option than to stick to the current one. In other words, it is because she lacks opportunities that her employer acquires uncontrolled power over her. Thus, ensuring that people have enough opportunities to bring their talents to fruition means preventing that an uncontrolled power imbalance between employers and employees arises in the first place. If an employee is able to find another job easily, an employer has fewer power to impose working conditions which merely reflect his will. After all, the employee could quit her job, depriving the employer of the opportunity to unilaterally impose working conditions on her.

Equality of opportunity ensures that no one sees one's opportunities constrained by things such as one's social background. It is thus an effective means to ensure that people can bring their talents to fruition and that they do not get stuck in what might turn out to become a dominating employment relation.

#### 4.4.6 WHY EQUAL NON-DOMINATION DOES NOT CAPTURE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The objection in the previous section rightly pointed out that neo-republicans should be concerned with people's opportunities and not only with putting constraints on the power associated with social positions, as Dougherty seems to suggest. However, as I shall argue in this section, while this points out a weakness in Dougherty's argumentation, it does not seem to be enough to vindicate that his argument is flawed. The main reason for this is that the objections in the previous argumentation give us a compelling rationale for why neo-republicans should object to certain inequalities of opportunity, but not for why equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity.

The objection in the previous section points out that equality of opportunity is an important building block to ensure that employees have reliable exit options, thus avoiding domination by employers. Of course, being subject to inequality of opportunity is detrimental for employees to have reliable exit options. If, for example, an employee depends on having a job, but, due to her social background, has no hope of finding another job than his current one, she is vulnerable to domination by her current employer. But while the neo-republican concern for people's exit options surely allows us to object to cases of inequality of opportunity such as this one, it seems far from obvious that it takes us to a full endorsement of equality of opportunity. In fact, with respect to the previous example, such an endorsement would mean that the employee who is vulnerable to domination by her employer needs to have the same prospects of success when engaging in competitive hiring procedures as anyone else with the same talent and ambition. It seems far from obvious how the neo-republican concern for people's exit options could ground such a claim.

Imagine that our employee has almost the same prospects of success in meritocratic hiring procedures as someone else. In other words, the other person has slightly more opportunities than our employee. While this scenario violates equality of opportunity, it is hard to see how it is objectionable from a neo-republican perspective. In fact, the previous scenario is compatible with our employee having a reasonable array of opportunities, and thus exit options. As long as this is the case, this seems enough to avoid domination. Why should neo-republicans be concerned with the fact that the other person has more opportunities if our employee has *enough* exit options? The point is that neo-republican non-domination only gives us a compelling rationale for the employee in our example to have a *threshold of opportunities*, such that that she has enough exit options to avoid domination by

her current employer. That surely means that there should not be a severe inequality of opportunity between her and someone else with the same talent and ambition. However, it is not clear why reaching this threshold requires equality of opportunity. After all, it seems perfectly conceivable that the employee in our example has enough exit options even if people with the same talent and ambition have even more opportunities.

In sum, equal non-domination is concerned with people's opportunities to ensure non-domination amongst people. This concern allows neo-republicans to object to certain cases of inequality of opportunity. They undermine the availability of employees exit options, thus exposing them to domination by their employers. However, the problem is that, while it seems clear that severe violations of inequality of opportunity give rise to these scenarios, it is far from obvious that equality of opportunity is required to prevent them. For instance, it is hard to see how these concerns could ground a neo-republican objection to slight inequalities of opportunity.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was concerned with the question whether the second question of the sufficiency hypothesis, namely whether securing equal non-domination is enough for the positive aim of Anderson's theory of relational egalitarianism to be fulfilled. The latter requires that people and / or groups relate to each other in such a way that everyone has the capability to function as an equal citizen. I argued that the answer to this question is 'no' and that, as a result, equal non-domination is not sufficient to ensure relational equality.

This chapter focussed on equality of opportunity, as this aspect is captured by Anderson's positive aim, but not her negative aim, which is about non-oppressive relationships. I first motivated how equality of opportunity, which is a concept that has typically been associated with distributive egalitarianism, relates to distributive egalitarianism. More precisely, I argued that Cohen's principle of mutual justification on which Anderson draws as well serves as a plausible way to embed equality of opportunity in her approach to relational egalitarianism.

I then turned to the question what equal non-domination has to say about equality of opportunity. I showed that Pettit tacitly assumes that the concerns of equality of opportunity are taken care of if domination is eradicated, but that he does not specify how.

I thus turned to two recent contributions on the relationship between equal non-domination and equality of opportunity, to wit O'Shea (2019) and Dougherty (2021) who both argue that equal non-domination is unable to capture equality of opportunity. O'Shea's argument pointed out that equal non-domination is unable to object to violations of formal equality of opportunity which arise through an omitted offer.

I rejected this argument. I argued that, while O'Shea's argument rightly points out a limitation of the neo-republican conception of interference, the specific violation of equality of opportunity seems to be dominating as it involves an unrestricted and thus uncontrolled power imbalance.

I then turned to Dougherty's argument which claimed that equal non-domination only allows us to put constraints on the power associated with social positions, but not on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position.

I argued against this position by pointing out that equal non-domination enables us to be concerned about people's opportunities, in particular to safeguard their exit options to avoid that certain agents acquire too much power over others. However, I subsequently argued that this neo-republican objection does not take us to the conclusion that equal non-domination captures equality of opportunity. The problem is that this objection allows us to object to certain inequalities of opportunities, but not to fully endorse equality of opportunity.

## CONCLUSION

### SUMMARY

What is the relationship between neo-republican justice and relational egalitarianism? The pioneers of these views, Phillip Pettit and Elizabeth Anderson, have differing views on this question: On the one hand, Pettit seems to think that securing non-domination, the master value of neo-republican justice, is both necessary and sufficient for relational egalitarianism. On the other hand, Anderson seems to think that non-domination is necessary to obtain relational equality, but not sufficient. The relationship between these accounts of justice is still highly underexplored. This thesis was an attempt to shed more light on this relationship. It aimed at answering the following question:

*Sufficiency hypothesis:* Is freedom from domination (as conceived by Pettit) a sufficient condition for relational equality (as conceived by Anderson)?

Knowing the answer to this question is important, since relational egalitarians face different challenges depending on how such an answer turns out to be. If Pettit's take on the sufficiency hypothesis holds, relational egalitarians will need to motivate why the objection to injustice should ultimately be about people not relating as equals rather than there being domination. If Anderson's view is correct, relational egalitarians would then need to show what is needed in addition to realize the relational ideal of justice.

This thesis did not aim at providing an answer to the sufficiency hypothesis *tout court*. Instead, it restricted itself to social justice and left political legitimacy, i.e., the question how the state relates to its citizens in imposing a chosen social order, out of the picture. Furthermore, it restricted itself to the comparison between Pettit's and Anderson's views.

Chapter 1 was dedicated to the task of explaining Pettit's account of neo-republican justice. His account claims that securing social justice requires the eradication of domination, i.e., uncontrolled power imbalances between agents. I subsequently explained Pettit's account of domination in further detail. More precisely, I explained his concept of power as power to interfere with another agent's choice set (section 1.2.1) and under what conditions power is controlled (section 1.2.2).

The topic of chapter 3 was Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism. I first qualified that relating as equals requires that one specifies with respect to what dimension people



should relate as equals. I subsequently showed that Anderson conceives of the relevant dimension in terms of people's moral standing: people should relate to each other in such a way that everyone's equal moral worth is honored (section 2.2). This view has both a negative and a positive implication. The negative implication is that people should relate to each other in such a way that they have the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships. I subsequently explained every aspect of an oppressive relationship (sections 2.3.2 – 2.3.6): exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, violence and domination. The positive implication is that people should relate to each other in such a way that everyone has the capabilities to function as an equal citizen. I subsequently explained that this requires that people relate to each other such that everyone has the capabilities to function as a political agent and the capabilities to function as an equal in civil society (section 2.4).

Based on the explanations of Pettit's and Anderson's accounts, we were able to state what questions need to be answered to verify the sufficiency hypothesis (section 2.5):

- Does ensuring non-domination safeguard that people relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities to avoid entanglement in oppressive relationships?
- Does ensuring neo-republican justice safeguard that people relate to each other in such a way that everyone is granted the capabilities to function as an equal citizen?

Chapter 3 was concerned with the first question. I asked for each face of oppression whether neo-republican justice is able to object to it. I argued that the answer is the same for each face of oppression, namely 'yes'. They all involve an uncontrolled power imbalance. In the case of exploitation and marginalization, those subject to power do not have any directive influence on the terms imposed on them. Cultural imperialism is not compatible with neo-republican justice, because it does not leave room for social norms to be building blocks against members of privileged social groups to impose their interpretation of social life on members of disadvantaged social groups. Violence is objectionable from a neo-republican perspective, since it does not ensure that offenders are held accountable by the legal systems and that social norms have deterring effect on them.

Whether the sufficiency hypothesis should be rejected thus hinged on the answer to the second question, the topic of chapter 4. In this chapter, I first had to identify failures of equality of opportunity as a case which is captured by the positive aim of Anderson's account, but not the negative aim (section 4.2). I then clarified how equality of opportunity as

a traditional concept of distributive egalitarianism fits into Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism (section 4.3). In section 4.4, I first argued that Pettit seems to presuppose that equality of opportunity is taken care of once equal non-domination is secured (section 4.4.1). The fact that Pettit did not elucidate this assumption is somewhat surprising, since the neo-republican concern for inter-agential power imbalances and the concern for people's opportunities seem fairly different from each other.

I thus discussed two recent contributions on that matter in the subsequent sections.

The first one is by O'Shea and claims that neo-republican justice is unable to object to violations of equality of opportunity which involve an omitted offer (section 4.4.2). I argued that, while O'Shea points out a weakness in Pettit's conception of power, it does not allow us to conclude that there is no domination in such a case. In fact, an omitted offer still means that one agent has too much discretion over another agent, which is why the latter has no control over the power of the former (section 4.4.3).

The second contribution on the relationship between equality of opportunity and equal non-domination is by Dougherty (2021). He argues that neo-republican justice only allows for putting constraints on the power associated with social positions, but not on the permutation of individuals that occupy a given position (section 4.4.4). I then put forth a neo-republican objection to his argument: equality of opportunity is an important means to ensure that people have reliable access to exit options, which allows them to escape dominating relationships (section 4.4.5). In the subsequent section, I rejected this objection. While it rightly points out that Dougherty is wrong by supposing that neo-republicanism only allows for advocating constraints on social positions, the neo-republican concern for exit options does not take neo-republicanism to capture equality of opportunity. While it is important to ensure that people be granted some opportunities to ensure that people have exit options, it is unclear why they should benefit from equality of opportunity for the sake of having enough exit options (section 4.4.6).

In sum, neo-republican justice does not fully capture equality of opportunity and thus the positive aim of Anderson's account of relational egalitarianism. For this reason, the sufficiency hypothesis needs to be rejected: freedom from domination is not sufficient for relational equality.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The contribution of this thesis to clarifying the relationship between neo-republican justice and relational egalitarianism is subject to a series of limitations.

One obvious limitation is its focus on sufficiency. While the question whether non-domination is even necessary for relational equality has received much less attention in the literature than the sufficiency hypothesis, it is not taken for granted by everyone. For example, Schmidt (2018) put forth a series of examples to which neo-republican justice is able to object, but not relational egalitarianism. An obvious way to shed further light on the relationship between neo-republican justice would thus be to verify the necessity hypothesis: is equal non-domination necessary for relational equality?

Another important limitation of this thesis is its focus on social justice. While Pettit explained in succinct detail what neo-republicanism requires with respect to political legitimacy, it is *prima facie* much less clear what the implications of relational egalitarianism are regarding the question what constraints the state should be subject to when imposing a chosen social order. According to relational egalitarians, the state has to be at the service of citizens in various ways: it has to give them what they are due and it needs to ensure that people encounter each other on a footing of equality (Schemmel, 2021: 70). However, as Schemmel argues, “none of this means that, literally, there is any form of equality between them, nor does it make clearer what it might mean to demand it.” (Schemmel, 2021: 70). A further way to clarify the relationship between relational egalitarianism and neo-republican justice would thus be to verify the necessity and / or the sufficiency hypothesis with regards to political legitimacy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Nicholas Vrousalis, for his helpful supervision. It was largely thanks to his accurate comments on previous drafts that I was able to narrow down the scope of this thesis and to strengthen its arguments.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Andreas Bengtson, for his help. Although taking his course on relational egalitarianism at the University of Groningen meant a weekly 5-hour train trip from Rotterdam to Groningen and back throughout autumn 2021, it was fully worth it. His course was very interesting and sparked my interest in exploring the relationship between neo-republicanism and relational egalitarianism. Andreas Bengtson helped me a lot during the early stages of the thesis-writing process and his comments on previous drafts allowed me to disentangle Anderson's views from Young's views more clearly.

I also want to thank the participants of the EIPE research seminar of April 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 for their helpful comments on a previous draft. In particular, I would like to thank Gergana Boncheva and Elisabetta Gobbo who both commented on my draft and whose points were very helpful to further improve this thesis.

Another person who I would like to thank is Elena Icardi, PhD Student at the University of Milan, who gave me a lot of important insights to improve chapter 4 of this thesis.

Thank you also to the whole EIPE community for having created a stimulating intellectual environment which allowed me to grow as a philosopher, but also as a person. The members of the EIPE-community which I would like to thank the most are Christoph, Bronagh and Marc. I spent countless nights with Christoph and Bronagh during the curfew hours, discussing everything and anything. Although the pandemic surely had a negative impact on our lives here in Rotterdam, I will cherish these moments forever. There are many more which would be worth mentioning here, but the list is almost endless. In a nutshell: I am very happy to have you in my life! I also want to thank Marc for our conversations and the hours spent on the Squash court. We had many epic battles! I am also very happy to have you in my life.

The biggest shout-out goes to my parents. I cannot describe how grateful I am to have you as my parents. You stood behind me no matter what and backed me up during the most difficult months of my life in autumn 2022. You inspire me and I love you!

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